



File Code: 1950

Date: December 3, 2018

**REQUEST FOR COMMENTS
THREEMILE RESTORATION AND RESILIENCY PROJECT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Dear Planning Partner:

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Threemile Restoration and Resiliency Project is available for review during a public 30-day notice and comment period. This is the second time the EA is being made available for 30 day notice and comment. The legal notice announcing the November 2 to December 3 comment period was not posted to the Forest's web page within the statutorily required four days after publication in the Billings Gazette. Therefore, the EA is being made available, again, for 30 day notice and comment period, and the legal notice will be published to the project web page within the designated timeframe. Comments submitted during the November 2 to December 3, 2018 comment period do not have to be re-submitted and will be included as part of the record. A copy of the EA and supporting documents may be obtained from the Custer Gallatin National Forest's website at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/custergallatin/landmanagement/projects> Or by contacting the Ashland Ranger District at 406-784-2344.

The project area encompasses 32,924 acres, of which about 12,137 acres are currently forested with ponderosa pine. The Ashland Ranger District, Custer Gallatin National Forest is proposing vegetation treatments that are focused on the existing ponderosa pine forest cover. The ponderosa pine forested setting is the resource of concern and vegetation composition, vegetation structure, patch size, pattern, insect and disease hazard, planting, reducing fuel loads to enhance fire suppression capabilities, and providing wood products to contribute to employment and industry in local communities are the issues pertaining to the purpose and need for restoring the pine ecosystems to a more heterogeneous landscape that are resilient to natural disturbances.

The Threemile Restoration and Resiliency Environmental Assessment summarizes the environmental consequences to the forest vegetation and considers the effects of a No Action Alternative and two action alternatives (Alternative A and Alternative B) across approximately 12,137 forested acres within the project area. Alternative A proposes treatment on approximately 4,759 forested acres and Alternative B on 4,493 forested acres. An additional 240 acres under both alternatives will be reforested (planting of ponderosa pine). Proposed treatment includes commercial tractor logging (a mix of thinning densities, tree clumps, and small openings), post-sale noncommercial thinning treatments, pile burning, and broadcast burning. Treatments are proposed to meet the purpose and need for action, and while each



alternative consists of similar treatments, broadcast burning was dropped in Alternative B to lessen the amount of change in forested cover for wildlife concerns.

Comment Process: Public review and comment on this Environmental Assessment will be accepted for 30 days, from the date of legal notice appearing in the Billings Gazette (anticipated December 7, 2018). Comments should be within the scope and specific to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider. Please list specific treatment types or geographic areas where you have concerns. You may submit comments by:

- Hand delivered or oral comments may be submitted to the Ashland Ranger District in Ashland, MT. Office business hours are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.
- Hard copy mail to the Ashland Ranger District at P.O. Box 168, Ashland, MT 59003.
- FAX (406-784-2596)
- This corrects the email address where electronic comments may be submitted from the earlier published October 26, 2018 legal notice. Electronic comments may be submitted via email at: comments-northern-custer-ashland@fs.fed.us
- The Threemile Restoration and Resiliency Environmental Assessment and supporting documents are available at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=52677>
- Access to the Custer Gallatin Web Site at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/custergallatin/landmanagement/projects>. Find the link for the Threemile Restoration and Resiliency Project that is *Under Analysis*. You may need to click on the link for "Additional Projects by the Custer Gallatin N.F" and then the next link for additional projects (data.ecosystem...) to find projects for the Custer portion of the Custer Gallatin National Forest.

Please provide your name, postal address, and telephone number. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

For further information, or if you need assistance navigating the electronic comment submittal, please contact Mark Slacks at 406-255-1450.

Upon the conclusion of the 30-day comment period, the Custer Gallatin National Forest will publish an Environmental Assessment and Draft Decision Notice that is subject to the 36 CFR 218 Objection Process.

Sincerely,



RONALD E. HECKER
District Ranger